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A DESCRIPTIVE LABEL FOR SPURS

A DESCRIPTIVE label lately put in place in the armor gallery aims to name and to explain the various forms of European spurs. As in the descriptive labels of helmets or pole-arms earlier referred to in the BULLETIN, we now trace the pedigree of the spurs, noting how their typical forms arose and supplanted one another during the centuries. Following the plan in our former labels a "remark" is included, which here gives the names of the parts of a well-developed spur so that one may know at once what is meant by "rowel," "heel-plate," "crest," etc., and may also have his attention called to structures which play an important rôle in the development of spurs as shown in the main diagram.

In passing briefly in review the thirty or more forms of spurs illustrated, we find that the earliest one—which occurs in the Hallstatt period, roundly between 700 and 400 B. C.—was little more than a conical spine, or prong, of bronze, borne by short sides which suggest the heel-plate of later spurs, and buttoned to the heel by means of straps. For centuries this type of spur changed but little; it is known under the general name of prick spur. In one line of development, however, its sides grew longer (200 B. C.) and were attached differently to the straps (early centuries A. D.). In another line of development the neck of the spur elongated: in some cases the prong or spine-like element became so long as to be distinctly dangerous to the horse, for the rider who was not supremely skilful might easily thrust it through the visceral wall of a fractious mount and thus cause a fatal wound. Hence, in order to guard against the danger of a deep spur-thrust, various devices came gradually into use. At first the neck of the spur was thickened and the point made more obtuse (500 A. D.), but this device was apparently unsatisfactory, for a sharper point caused the horse to respond more effectively, so we note that between the years 900 and 1000 the tip of the spur, while sharp and delicate, arises abruptly from a blunted or truncated base which

could not puncture the body-wall of the horse. This system was followed by ball-and-spike spurs (1100-1350) or by the pyramidal-point prick spurs (1200-1350). It was during this period, by the way, that the sides of the spur underwent a special evolution. They became "molded" around the heel, bending downward, then upward and forward in such a way that the wearer could alter slightly the position of his spur through the retractor and extensor muscles of the front part of his foot and thus gauge very delicately the direction and force of his stroke.

An important advancing structure of the spur appears in many countries of Europe during the fourteenth century. This was the wheel or rowel which replaced the spine, or point of the earlier spurs, or rather multiplied this point many times, for it served to goad the horse at each partial turn of the wheel. Just what were the stages or steps in the appearance of the rowel we cannot say, for we have today no documents. It seems to have arisen suddenly in the evolution of spurs in a way that suggests "mutations" in the evolution of plants and beasts. Certain it is that when the rowel appeared it was already fully developed: probably the idea of it "popped" into the mind of some spur-bearer when he noticed a contrivance already in use in the Middle Ages but for another purpose. Thus, pointed wheels of various forms were probably early employed by bookbinders for ornamenting their leather, or even by cooks when tracing patterns on their pastry. At all events, from that time onward the rowel has been, perhaps, the most characteristic structure of spurs. From an early rowel spur we have apparently three main lines of development. One gave rise to the box-heel spur, another led to the long-necked and cup-heeled spurs, and a third produced the vast number of types which flourished during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

In the box-heeled spur the heel-plate and crest of the spur grew to great size.

In the long-necked and cup-heeled spur the entire neck of the spur lengthened out so that a rider with feet thrust far forward

in the fashion of his day might still goad his horse, even under its heavy trappings or barding. The cup-heeled spur, the terminal of this line, developed its sides somewhat in the fashion in which the box-heeled spur developed only the heel-plate and crest.

In the main line of spurs there was little differentiation of the heel-plate and sides of the spur, although we know that in the eighteenth century (and even in the seventeenth century) a hinge was here sometimes developed to fit the spur more accurately to the foot. We might mention, also, a curiously degenerate box spur, which occurred from the late seventeenth century, in which the sides entirely disappear, the heel-plate developing merely as a flange to be attached to the rim of a low shoe. It was, however, in the region of the neck and rowel that great changes took place in this third line of spurs. In the rowel such forms as star, rose, and foliate make their appearance: some of them attained enormous size by about the year 1600, while others grew smaller and smaller until in the spur of the modern trooper the points of the rowel are minute in size. Great changes also took place in the ridge of the spur. The maximum evolution in this structure appeared in the great rowel spurs of about the year 1600. Another change in the region of the ridge develops during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when ornaments occur between the neck and the heel-plate and eventually cause the neck of the spur to bend abruptly downward. About this time, too, many abnormal or monstrous forms made their appearance. In some, for example, the neck of the spur underwent lateral or vertical "fission" giving rise to two, three, five, or even a greater number of rowels.

We might mention, finally, extreme development in Spanish and Mexican spurs, some of which attain enormous size. In earlier types it was the rowel and neck which produced many varieties. In later ones it was the side and heel-plate which developed oddly. In some of the latter the sides of the spur became roped, scalloped, and massive—in cases so heavy that the pair weighs about five pounds.

We should not forget, by the way, the importance of the spur as a symbol of the high honor of knighthood, for on this account, if on no other, it received on all sides and during many centuries a degree of attention which clearly fostered its artistic evolution.

B. D.

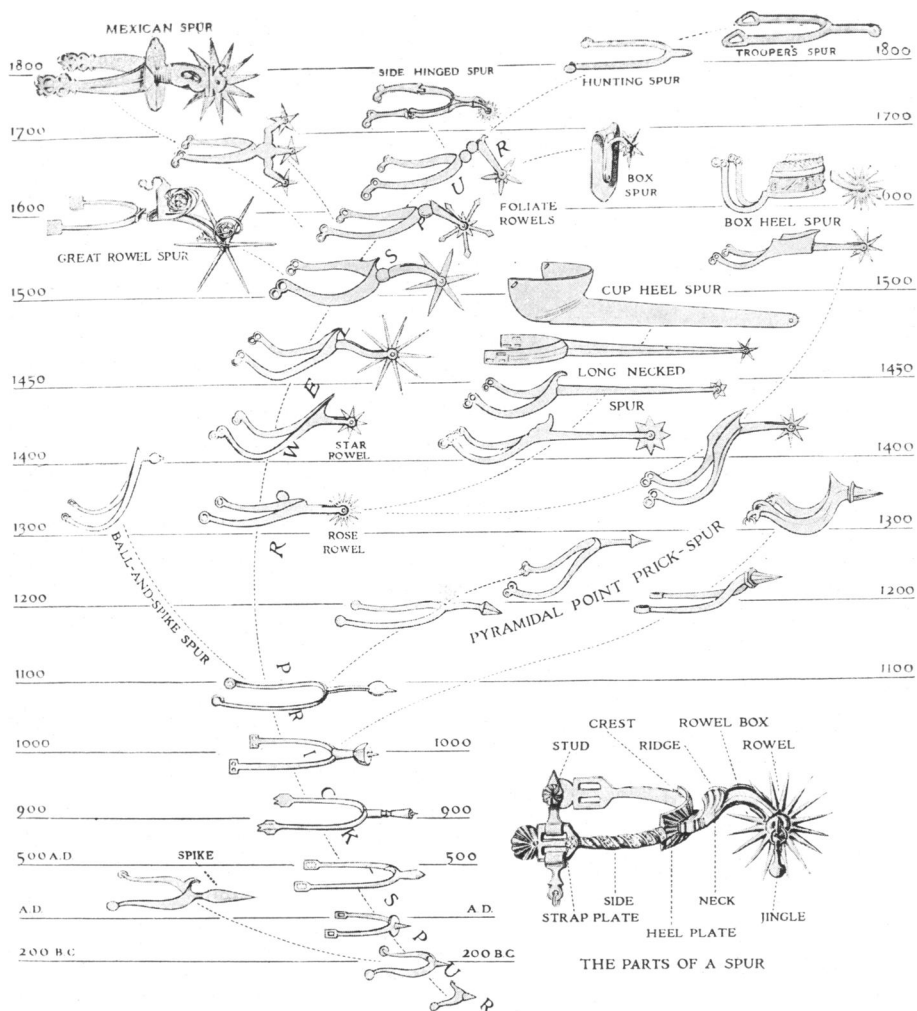
THE SCULPTURE OF PAUL MANSHIP

THE discerning frequenter of exhibitions of modern sculpture, especially in New York, for some four years past has noted and admired the occasional contributions of Paul Manship.¹ Too often in these exhibitions the trained eye saw for the most part only academic perfection and resulting lifelessness, lack of creative power, of originality, or of style. Occasionally promise of future achievement was indicated in some bronze or marble, but with very few exceptions this was all. In Mr. Manship's work, however, one was always face to face with actual accomplishment.

To the larger public interested in artistic achievement the first exhibition of Mr. Manship's sculpture, held in New York late last winter, created a veritable sensation. The extreme modernists and the academicians united in paying a tribute to his genius: his success was complete.

This success was repeated last summer at Bar Harbor, Maine, where a representative group of twenty-six bronzes by this gifted artist was shown. The exhibition was held in the Print Room of the Jesup Memorial Library from August 14 to September 2, and was visited by 2,860 people, which is believed to be a record attendance for a town of this size. It was installed by Edward Robinson, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Particularly effective was the placing of the Sun-dial,

¹There are in the Museum at present three examples of the work of Paul Manship: the Centaur and Nymph, purchased in 1914; Pauline Frances—Three Weeks Old, the gift of Mrs. Edward F. Dwight; and the Flight of Night, recently lent to the Museum by A. E. Gallatin, and now shown with other American bronzes in Room 9 on the second floor.—The Editor.



SPURS
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COMMONER FORMS
DURING THE CENTURIES

RASHFORD OCEAN, DIR.

STANLEY J. ROWLAND, DEL.